

## **A New Medication for Smoking Cessation**

VISN 1 MIRECC researchers have found that a new medication, selegiline triples the treatment success rate for cigarette smokers. Forty cigarette smokers were treated with 8 weeks of counseling sessions combined with placebo (sugar pills) or with selegiline a medicine currently used in the U.S. to treat Parkinson's disease. Quit rates at the end of treatment were 45% for the selegiline group compared with only 15% for the placebo group. In the six months after treatment, many participants resumed smoking but quit rates were still higher in the selegiline group at 20% compared with 5% in the placebo group. Side effects were mild and comparable in patients treated with either placebo or selegiline, which was prescribed in low doses (10 mg per day). Depression symptoms were high in around one-third of the participants and had a negative impact on quit rates. In fact, rates of smoking in patients with depression are much higher (40%-60%) than in the general population (around 25%). This ground-breaking study is the first to evaluate selegiline as a treatment for cigarette smoking. If findings from this study are confirmed in larger trials, selegiline could be added to a list of anti-smoking medications that is currently limited to nicotine replacement products (patches, gum) and bupropion, a medication that also works as an antidepressant. Results of this study demonstrate the difficulty of stopping smoking, as more than half of the participants failed to quit in the short run even when they received selegiline added to 8 weeks of counseling. With counseling alone, only 15% were able to quit. Clearly, combined medications and counseling gives the best results. MIRECC researcher Tony George led a research team including MIRECC researcher Thomas Kosten and Yale researchers Jennifer Vessicchio, Angelo Termine, Peter Jatlow and Stephanie O'Malley.